



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY BOARD

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CSB Releases New Safety Video on One Year Anniversary of Kleen Energy; “Deadly Practices” Focuses on ConAgra and Kleen Energy Explosions to Show Hazards of Gas Releases

Washington, DC, February 4, 2011 – The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) today released a new safety video depicting two major accidents caused by the intentional release of flammable fuel gas near work areas, one year after the Kleen Energy explosion. The fifteen-minute long video focuses on two accidents investigated by the CSB. A June 9, 2009, explosion at the ConAgra Slim Jim plant near Garner, North Carolina, that fatally injured four workers and injured 67 others; and a February 7, 2010, explosion at the Kleen Energy natural gas powered electric generating plant under construction in Middletown, Connecticut, that killed six workers and injured at least 50 others.

The two incidents involved the intentional release of flammable natural gas into work areas, putting workers and nearby communities at risk of fires and explosions. At the Kleen Energy facility workers were conducting a "gas blow," a procedure that forced natural gas at high volume and pressure through newly-installed piping to remove debris. The gas was vented to the atmosphere, where it accumulated, came in contact with an ignition source and exploded. At the ConAgra facility workers were purging a pipe feeding gas to an industrial heater. During the purging operation, gas was allowed to flow through the pipe and exit through an open valve inside the utility room where the water heater was located. Flammable gas accumulated inside the building and eventually found an ignition source.

Entitled “Deadly Practices,” the video includes animations that show the hazards of releasing gas into areas where it can accumulate, ignite, and kill or injure workers or members of the public. The video is available online at www.CSB.gov and on the CSB’s YouTube channel.

In the video CSB Chairperson Rafael Moure-Eraso says, “The deadly accidents at Kleen Energy and ConAgra were entirely preventable. At the Chemical Safety Board, it is our hope that standards will be put in place that will require these safer practices, which we believe will save lives.”

As a result of the CSB’s investigation the board released urgent recommendations aimed at preventing future tragedies. The CSB recommended that OSHA promulgate regulations that address fuel gas safety for both construction and general industry.

In the video, Don Holmstrom, the CSB’s Lead Investigator into both of these incidents, speaks to a key recommendation on cleaning piping at power plants: “The CSB

believes that the use of flammable natural gas in gas blows is inherently unsafe and alternate methods should be used.”

In September 2010 the Governor of Connecticut issued an executive order banning the use of natural gas blows during power plant construction in the state. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the International Code Council (ICC) are taking action to ban the use of natural gas for cleaning and purging pipes.

The CSB’s safety videos are provided free of charge and can be requested at www.csb.gov.

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating serious chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems.

The Board does not issue citations or fines but does make safety recommendations to plants, industry organizations, labor groups, and regulatory agencies such as OSHA and EPA. Visit our website, www.csb.gov.

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